



Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown
Eastern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, March 24, 2009
www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae
Docket #: 2:04-cr-387-MCE

CONTACT: Lauren Horwood
PHONE: 916-554-2706
usacae.edcapress@usdoj.gov

AFTON GENERAL STORE OWNER GUILTY OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

Jury Rejects Entrapment Defense

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown announced that a federal jury returned a guilty verdict today, convicting JESUS RODRIGUEZ, 41, of Biggs, Calif., of two counts of methamphetamine possession with intent to distribute. This followed a six-day trial before United States District Judge Morrison C. England Jr. RODRIGUEZ was immediately taken into custody by U.S. Marshals.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force, NET-5 Drug Task Force, and the FBI with the assistance of other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Phillip A. Talbert and Heiko P. Coppola, who are prosecuting the case, the evidence introduced at trial showed that RODRIGUEZ delivered one-half pound of crystal methamphetamine on two occasions in 2004 to an undercover DEA informant. The second transaction took place inside RODRIGUEZ's place of business, the Afton General Store, which is in Glenn County, Calif.

When officers and agents attempted to arrest RODRIGUEZ, he led them on a high-speed car chase, during which he threw three-quarters of a pound of crystal methamphetamine out his car window. He also called his sister during the chase. RODRIGUEZ's sister was apprehended by agents and officers as she fled the rear of the store carrying a box containing four handguns and used drug-packaging material. A search of the store pursuant to a federal search warrant revealed a digital scale and approximately \$30,000 in U.S. Currency, much of it in heat-sealed plastic. Agents also discovered DEA prerecorded-buy funds among the heat-sealed currency. RODRIGUEZ testified at trial and claimed he had been entrapped, which the jury promptly rejected after less than a full day of deliberation.

RODRIGUEZ was charged following an investigation that led to the indictment and conviction of 30 individuals on methamphetamine trafficking offenses in and from the Yuba and Sutter County area. He is scheduled to be sentenced on June 4, 2009, at 9:00 a.m.

"The conviction of Jesus Rodriguez is the culmination of an intensive crackdown on methamphetamine distribution in Yuba and Sutter Counties. Through outstanding collaborative investigative efforts, 30 hardcore meth traffickers have been removed from our communities," said Acting U.S. Attorney Brown.

The maximum statutory penalty for this conviction is life in prison. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

###